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MAGAZINE

FOR

TOWN AND COUNTRY.

Nº CCCCXII.

APRIL, 1864.

LONDON:

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A CAMPAIGNER AT HOME.
III.—MEMORIAL POETRY.—AN ESSAY BY THE DOCTOR.

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THE SONG OF THE LITTLE BALTUNG. BY C. KINGSLEY.

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NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Correspondents are desired to observe that all Communications must be addressed direct to the Editor.

Rejected Contributions cannot be returned.

MR. THACKERAY.

MR. THACKERAY'S melancholy and unexpected death makes it natural to take some notice of the general character of his writings.

There has been much controversy on the moral effects of novels; and it is only of late years that the public at large, and especially the religious public, appear to have given way to irresistible force, and to have admitted by their conduct, and also by their teaching, that novel-reading is not wicked, and that it is even possible that a novel may be a good and useful book. The denunciations against novels which may be read in old-fashioned sermons are still as good as when they were first written, yet no one reads them. Baxter says, 'Another dangerous time-wasting sin is the reading of vain books, play-books, romances, and feigned histories. I speak not here how pernicious this vice is, by corrupting the fancy and affections, and putting you out of relish to necessary things; but bethink you, before you spend another hour in any such books, whether you can comfortably give an account of it unto God?' Elsewhere he says, 'Another point of sensuality to be denied is the reading or hearing of false and tempting books, and those that only tend to please an idle fancy, and not to edify. Such as are romances and other feigned histories of that nature, with books of tales and jests, and foolish compliments, with which the world so much aboundeth that there's few but may have admittance to this library of the devil.' He goes on to show how these works 'ensnare us in a world of guilt,' 'dangerously bewitch and corrupt the minds of young and empty people, and rob men of much precious time.' And he concludes with these emphatic exhortations, which afford a strange contrast to the tone of modern reviews, even if they are of the stricter sort: 'Therefore I may well conclude that play-books, and history fables, and romances, and such like, are the very poison of youth, the prevention of grace, the fuel of wantonness and lust, and the food and work of empty, vicious, graceless persons; and it's great pity they be not banished out of the commonwealth.' 'All these considered, I beseech you, throw away these pestilent vanities, and take them not into your hands, nor suffer them in the hands of your children, or in your houses, but burn them as you would do a conjuring book, and as they did, Acts xix. 19, that so they may do no mischief to others.'

These vigorous denunciations embody, in plain words, a sentiment which, in our own days, is altogether worn out, in so far as novels were its object. It was, however, exceedingly powerful in its day; and long after it had ceased to be openly or generally avowed, it continued to exercise a very perceptible influence, not only over the opinion which the public entertained of novels and their writers, but over the opinion which novelists entertained of themselves and their works. With some striking exceptions, a certain Bohemian air hung about our principal writers of fiction for a length of time. A humorist is almost always a person of more than average sensibility, and these qualities are almost certain to put their possessor more or less in opposition to the established state of things. Both Fielding and Smollet are memorable instances of this; and though memorable names — such, especially, as that of Walter Scott—might be mentioned on the other side, it will be generally found, as was the case with Scott himself, that their attachment to what exists is owing, to a great extent, to the fact that they have been able to throw an air of romance over it. If he had not managed to idealize Scotland, and to see his bare-breeched Highlanders in a romantic point of view, Scott, hard-headed and sensible as he was, would hardly have managed to write the Waverley novels, however much he wanted to buy land. The moral novelists—such as Richardson, Miss Edgeworth, and Miss Austin—who are to fiction what

Arminians are to theology, belong to a different class. The whole colouring of their works is derived from a mental atmosphere altogether unlike that of the rebellious sentimentalists who seem to consider that wit, irony, and pathos are the instruments by which a just estimate may be formed of human affairs. For the last thirty or five-and-thirty years the writers who in the last century would have been prominent members of the literary opposition, have obtained an entirely new position, and have exercised a considerable influence on the whole course of thought. Novel writing has become not only a business, but by far the most lucrative branch of literary industry. A really good novel, by a well-known writer, is worth its weight, not in gold, but almost in five-pound notes. Thousands of pounds have of late years been paid for the right to publish a single edition of a story in numbers. After being published in numbers they are thrown into cheap editions, and find wings of one sort or another with which they fly over the whole face of the country. Their influence is enormous. They are the favourite national indoors amusement. All men and all women read them, and many women read nothing else. Modern popular novels have far more influence over the morals of the public, and over their views of life, than the stage and the pulpit put together. Novels and newspapers have a sort of analogy to Church and State. The one represents to innumerable readers the active and business-like, the other the contemplative view of things. There are thousands upon thousands of young people, and a considerable number of people no longer young, whose principal experience of argument and discussion is derived from leading articles, and whose notions of the character and prospects of the world in which they live, of the nature of its institutions, and, in a word, of the general colour of life, are taken principally from novels. Whether we like it or not, such is the state of things to which, by a great variety of causes, we have been brought; and it ought to be recognized, if we are to try to estimate the nature of the influence which particular writers have exercised.

Mr. Thackeray was thrown, at the age at which people choose their professions, into the full current of light literature, and became one of the most prominent directors of that great outburst of the pathetic and impulsive view of things which has just been referred to. Its first beginnings were contemporary with what almost every one of a sufficiently ardent turn of mind to take a prominent part in fiction, regarded as the advent of a political millennium. The Reform Bill, and other measures of the same sort, had discredited all existing institutions, and the general temper of the times led men to look with favour on all new schemes, and to listen willingly to every one who was inclined to denounce or to banter the standing usages of society. The old Bohemianism of the ragged authors of the eighteenth century was transformed into political, literary, and social radicalism. From 1830 to 1848, or thereabouts, the prevailing tone of the more popular forms of light literature might be not unjustly described as a sort of rowdy young Englandism, differing from the white neckcloth, high-church variety of that creed, as the actual Mr. Douglas Jerrold differed from Mr. Disraeli's ideal. Lord Macaulay once humorously described himself as free from all taint of liberalism, as he 'was for war, hanging, and church establishments.' The current upon which Mr. Thackeray was originally launched ran in exactly the opposite direction. The early volumes of *Punch* overflow with proof of the horror with which its representative men affected to shudder at the notion of hanging a rogue, paying a bishop, or fighting the French. It was from this starting-point that several of our most popular writers set off in a career which led them in very different directions. Mr. Thackeray, when forced to rely on his own exertions, found himself led by one part of his character to associate with the picturesque regiment with which it was his lot to march through Coventry and other places.

He had the quick sympathies, the humour dashed with pathos, the genuine feeling, and, it must be added, the disinclination for severe thought and vigorous study, which predispose men to take such a view of life. He could do inimitably well the humorously sceptical criticism which often appears at first sight to settle everything by a pathetic smile or a sly allusion; and as he was compelled to produce periodical literature for the sake of earning his living, he naturally, and, indeed, inevitably, produced what he had it in him to produce. He had thus every prospect of becoming the chief musician in that impulsive band which proposed to fiddle down the walls of our social Jericho, at a small weekly charge, at per line, for caricatures and pathos. He had, however, something in him far too good for this kind of career.

There was one point in which he was infinitely superior to the noble army of mockers amongst whom he had happened to take service. By birth, by education, and by nature, he was a thorough gentleman. Public schools and universities were not in his eyes, as they were in those of some of his associates and several of his rivals, mere nests of prejudice and bulwarks of corruption. Cambridge and the Charterhouse had taught him to know his place in the world, and had made him deeply conscious of the fact—of which such a man as Mr. Jerrold never seemed to have the faintest notion—that those who manage the affairs of this country and administer its institutions are neither fools nor knaves, but men far better instructed, and much wiser than the toiling millions who were, and to some extent still are, flattered with the titles of hard-headed and hard-handed, whilst morally they were, to say the least, no worse. It was one of Mr. Thackeray's best points that he never overrated himself or the party with which he was accidentally associated. He knew perfectly well that a novel at its best estate ought to be regarded as nothing more than an elegant amusement, indirectly instructive; and that the true greatness and happiness of the world depend upon the exercise of sterner qualities. Mr. Dickens expressed his regret, in the *Cornhill Magazine*, that Mr. Thackeray did not sufficiently appreciate the dignity of his calling. He understood it far better than his critics, for he knew that it consisted principally in minding his own business, and writing about matters which he understood. His memory has not to bear the disgrace of such ignorant and mischievous libels as the description of the Circumlocution Office, or the attack on the Court of Chancery in *Bleak House*. If Mr. Thackeray had wrttten a novel about Law Reform, he would have thought it his duty to be acquainted with the elements of the subject. As it was, he knew the limits of his province, and studiously kept within them.

This just appreciation of his own gifts and of the mental attitude which it became him to assume, explain the principle characteristics of his books. His province, as he conceived it, was the description, not exactly of the lighter side of human nature, but of human nature in its lighter occupations. His works form a series of pictures of the men and women amongst whom he was accustomed to move, as far as he knew them. There were many points in their characters of which he was, and was contented to be, ignorant. He hardly ever in his earlier and more characteristic works introduces even references to the severer affairs of life. He did not know much of such matters, and he knew the extent of his ignorance. There are in his works no such characters or scenes as those which Sir Edward Lytton in our own country, or Balzac and Bernard amongst the French, are so fond of drawing. He never drew such a character as Lumley Ferrers or Audley Egerton, or the heroes of *L'homme Serieux* or the *Gentilhomme Campagnard*, nor is there anything to be found in his works like that vast network of all sorts and conditions of men—soldiers, statesmen, lawyers, merchants, bankers, shop-

keepers, and peasants — who ply their several tasks through the innumerable volumes of the *Comédie Humaine*, which Balzac fondly hoped would be a monument to him more durable than brass. Except the later novels, which take in a certain quantity of historical matter, and of which we shall speak more in detail immediately, his novels are all about the simplest matters—love-making, artless or selfish, in the manner of George Osborne, or in the manner of Dobbin; the schemes of Becky Sharpe to push herself in the world and to cheat her creditors; the ups and downs in the life of a sceptical, irresolute, sensitive young man about town, who writes for the newspapers; and other such matters. This certainly diminishes the interest of the books in one direction. The stirring, busy part of life is after all the most interesting part of it. Love-making and domestic schemes are but one ingredient in the pudding; and an appreciation of plums by no means excludes a certain satisfaction in suet. On the other hand, it must be admitted that the system of writing about what you understand, and not going beyond the length of your tether, is beyond all question the true one. When Balzac explains and illustrates by appropriate examples the course of all things human, divine, and infernal, showing how battles are fought, fortunes made, lawsuits determined, and empires governed; and when Sir E. Lytton, in a quieter way, converts his books into a cyclopædia of all mysteries and all knowledge, including as many classical quotations (and in many instances the same quotations) as *Burton's Anatomy*, the word humbug steals gently into the reader's mind. Mr. Thackeray's writings never suggest such a commentary. The Marquis of Steyne comes upon the stage in *Vanity Fair* to no very great purpose. We learn nothing about his public life or his political opinions, but as far as he goes, he is a genuine character, an excellent portrait of a debauched old grandee, who is still driven by passions which he ought to have outlived, to amuse himself with a sex which he despises. When Audley Egerton attitudinizes and works out the regulation contrast between an iron exterior and a tender heart, a dreadful suspicion grows up in the reader's mind that he is not the least like a cabinet minister, and that he and his red boxes and parliamentary eloquence are mostly in the nature of dramatic properties, and not very good ones. Balzac's statesmen and men of business may in reality be equally unnatural; but there is by nature so much more humbug in a Frenchman than in an Englishman that the expedient is less offensive in a French than in an English novel.

His scrupulous modesty and adherence to fact produced at least two effects on Mr. Thackeray's novels worth noticing. It accounts for much of the air of pathos which they wear. In one of the volumes of miscellanies there is a frontispiece representing a dwarfed figure with a large head. He is removing a laughing mask attached to a cap and bells, and underneath appear the author's own features, wearing a strange look of half bewildered sadness—the face of a man who has hardly shaken off an unpleasant dream. Again and again, in various parts of his books, the impression under which this little figure was drawn is conveyed to the reader by casual allusions, by turns of expression, by a thousand subtle intimations to the effect that the actor was rather tired of his part, and never heartily liked it. When a sensitive man is under a constant temptation to write about himself and his own feelings, he inevitably acquires a certain degree of mannerism, and it is impossible to be quite sure whether his feelings are entirely genuine. A person who, from a feeling that he ought to be dissatisfied with his occupation in life, is constantly telling himself that he is dissatisfied with it, probably hardly knows himself whether he really is so or not. There is no reason to suppose that Mr. Thackeray would have liked any other pursuit better than the one which he adopted, or that he was better fitted for any other; but, considering the arrogance which is the besetting sin of

popular writers, it is much to his credit that he should have felt the weak side of his calling, and should have regretted to see his hand subdued to what it worked in, as no doubt it often was. A writer by profession must by the necessity of the case write a good deal that would not sell if it had not his trade mark on it; and he must almost always feel that if his income was otherwise secured, and if he had energy enough to write at all under such circumstances, he would be able to write much better books than he is ever likely to make in the way of business.

It is a considerable thing, and shows a true perception of a man's real value, for so popular a writer as Mr. Thackeray was, to be able to bear this in mind. The flattery poured upon popular novelists, living or dead, in the present day, is a disgrace to what is technically called literature. Hardly any other class of men, except here and there popular preachers, get publicly cried over by their colleagues. When eminent men in other lines of life die, people do not put articles into newspapers or magazines, leaving out the Mr., putting in at length all the Christian names, and blubbering about them and theirs as if the fact that a man wrote novels made him and his affairs, and all the feelings of his friends and family, public property. To those who care for the maintenance of that wise reserve which is to all sturdy virtues what enamel is to teeth, such demonstrations are extremely unwelcome. If a man cannot control his feelings, let him go home, and cry his eyes out if he pleases; but he ought not to come before the public till he has washed his face and brushed his hair.

Besides producing this general impatience of the work in which he was engaged, Mr. Thackeray's genuine modesty and adherence to his own limits produced a noticeable specific effect on his writings. It contributed largely to the want of plot which is to be seen in all his books. This, no doubt, was partly due to the practice of publishing novels in parts—a practice far more advantageous to the novelist than to the novel; but the moral ground for it is to be found in the inherent honesty and simplicity of the man. A young gentleman in search of a profession once asked a venerable relative high in the Church what he thought of his becoming a doctor. 'No,' was the reply, 'I see a providential obstacle. You have not humbug enough about you.' The same obstacle prevented Mr. Thackeray from excelling in what is often considered the most attractive and even the most intellectual part of novel-writing—the devising of plots. He had very litte turn for this. If by any accident he brings in an unexpected incident or strange turn of events, you feel that he is tacitly despising his own trick. For instance, at the end of *Philip*, where the old coach upsets and is broken, whereby the will lost for many years is discovered, and the necessary fortune is sent in the right direction, there is a sort of intentional, or at least conscious clumsiness about the whole proceeding, which shows that the writer must have laughed at it himself. His caricature plots—the plots of the prize novels, for instance, or of *Rebecca and Rowena*—are much more ingenious than the plots of his principal works. The latter are without an exception what Baxter called feigned histories. They are fictitious biographies extending over a considerable space of time, and depending for their interest, not on any particular combination of circumstances, but on a succession of events, long enough to bring out naturally, and without perceptible effort, the leading characteristics of the personages of the story. No doubt this way of writing is apt to be dull. It cannot be denied that by the time that Pendennis leaves his chambers in the Temple, we, the readers, are as tired of them as he must have been; and long before Philip reaches the end of a career which has no particular termination after all, we get to feel that we know as much about him as we much care to know. On the other hand, a writer in whose works the ludicrous element, whether in its

simple or in its pathetic shape, has so very large a share, could hardly, without a certain contempt for himself, make his plots good, in the sense in which the plots of A. Dumas, for instance, are good. A reflective man, whose eyes are open to the grotesque side of human affairs, and especially to his own relation to them, can hardly fail to be struck with the absurdity of his own position, when he sits down to construct an elaborate series of adventures, coincidences, hairbreadth escapes, mistaken identities, and the like, which he is afterwards to describe with a sprightliness which will pass for real interest and emotion. To compose a plot calculated for descriptions of the deeper, sterner, and more tragic emotions, is a task on which serious labour might well be bestowed; but a man must rather overrate the value of a laugh if he is willing to take so much trouble to devise the telling of it; and a mind essentially humorous and pathetic will find occasions for the display of those gifts rather in the common routine of life than in forced unnatural situations. It is one of the great merits and beauties of Mr. Thackeray's style that his pathos is introduced in the most perfectly natural way, and never forced into artificial prominence. Death-bed scenes—which some writers would dwell upon as if they could not be content without actually rubbing the onions into their readers' eyes—are by him almost always left in the background, and rather indicated than described. He does not make us stand by the bedside of poor old Sedley, or give a minute description of the way in which Amelia received the news of George's death.

Passing from the consideration of Mr. Thackeray's general position in literature to that of his works, the first in order of time are four volumes of miscellanies, which contain a selection from the periodical writings, which for many years it was his regular profession to compose. As might have been expected, they are of most unequal merit. Many of them are very poor, and many others which possess considerable merit are so much disfigured by the defects which attach to almost all periodical writing, that their general effect is nearly spoilt. Even the worst of these performances, however, deserve notice, as they mark the point from which their author set out. It is curious to contrast their general temper and tone with that of their more elaborate successors. The *Book of Snobs*, republished from *Punch*, is a good landmark. It sums up, in the lengthy manner which is inseparably connected with periodical composition, one of the doctrines which Mr. Thackeray preached with diminishing vigour and relish all through his career. Every one knows its character. It was originally a lucky hit in *Punch*, and after the manner of such lucky hits, was repeated, diversified, and —to use an American adaptation of a French word for which we have no legitimate equivalent—'exploitered,' till it became rather wearisome. The general result of it is to this effect: 'In every walk of life is to be found meanness and a regard for low objects more or less concealed under pretensions to something higher. The writer will go through a number of illustrations of this general truth, and will show you meanness in society, meanness in professional life, meanness in domestic arrangements, pettiness and paltriness everywhere, under thousands of forms.' The effect which this had and the popularity which it enjoyed were very remarkable. By the fertility of his illustrations, and the wonderfully lifelike air which he gave to every little detail, Mr. Thackeray certainly contrived to produce a considerable effect on the public. He managed to convey the impression that all the common distinctions and usages of society were bad things, that they were founded upon a wretched love of money, a servile regard for the opinion of others, and the absence, or at any rate the weakness, of all the higher and more generous principles of conduct. The chief inference which at that time—somewhere about the thirty-fifth year of his age—Mr. Thackeray had extracted from his observation of the world was—

What a number of snobs there are in the world! What mean and petty motives regulate every-day life! Both the faults and the merits of the little book are obvious enough. It is very clever as far as it goes, but it goes a very little way. It is so contrived as to look like a picture of society, but in fact it is a picture of an infinitesimally small proportion of the life of an insignificant portion of society. The comfortable classes are represented as making a Bible of the peerage. How many people there are in those classes who could say with perfect truth that they never saw or thought of such a book, or of anything in any degree analogous to it! A keen eye may detect certain dashes of vulgarity in every man's manners and habits, but if we take any fair specimen of the bulk of the class which furnished Mr. Thackeray with his game, we shall find that he passes nine-tenths of his time and thoughts in his business; and far the greater part of the other tenth in relations with his family and his other immediate friends and connexions, which are in reality altogether prosaic, and afford no food at all for satire. The greatest excellence which can distinguish a satirist is a continual consciousness of the true scope of his satire, and of the fact that there is an immensely wide department of affairs which affords no room at all for it. In Mr. Thackeray's earlier works, and especially in the *Book of Snobs*, there is no consciousness of this, and the consequence is that the satire is more pungent, better written, because the writer attached more importance to it than it really deserved, and far less just and less pleasing to an impartial critic than the more enlightened satire of his later works. There is a sort of dash and acrid vigour about it which is the redeeming quality of early works; but this advantage is gained at a considerable price—a price which in his later days the author would not have thought it worth while to pay.

A considerable part of Mr. Thackeray's lighter compositions neither had, nor were meant to have, any moral at all. They were pure burlesques; and, considered in that point of view, they were perhaps the best things that he ever wrote—the best that have been written in our day. Such performances as the ballads of Policeman X, carry one particular kind of fun to the extreme limit which it is capable of attaining. The spelling is in itself a work of art. Almost all spelling which aims at representing the pronunciation of uneducated people is entirely conventional. Even Shakspeare does not attempt, when he brings a clown on the stage, to give more than a general notion of rusticity and awkwardness; and of the many novelists who introduce provincial dialects into their stories, hardly one is able to give to a reader who is not familiar with it beforehand the least notion of the kind of sound which he would hear if he went into the district described. The conventional cockney, for instance, is a man who transposes w and v, who always leaves out the initial h, and invariably prefixes it to an open vowel. This is not only not true, but has hardly any resemblance to the truth. Ten h's are wrongfully omitted for one that is improperly introduced; and the reason is obvious: it saves trouble to drop an h, but no one inserts them unless he wants to give extra emphasis to what he has to say. 'Hit is hadmitted on hall 'ands,' said a vulgar fellow, in the heat of a splendid oration. In quieter moments he might have talked of ''ands,' but never of 'hit' or 'hadmitted.' Mr. Thackeray was aware of all the refinements of what might be described as his native slang, and he reproduced it with marvelous fidelity. What can represent the particular forms of clipping and mumbling English in use in London better than Jacob Omnium's interview with the liveryman whose action was fatal to the Palace Court?

> For two-pound seventeen,
> This liveryman replied,
> For the keep of Mr. Jacob's 'oss,
> Which the thief had took to ride.
> 'Do you see anythink green in me?'
> Mr. Jacob Homnium cried.

'Because a raskle chews
My 'oss away to robb,
And goes tick at your mews
For seven-and-fifty bobb,
Shall *I* be called to pay? it is
A iniquitious job.

The gift of reproducing slang is comparatively unimportant; but the power of seeing the full grotesqueness of a grotesque incident which these ballads display is wonderful in its way. Nothing can show a deeper sense of humour than the notion of bringing together Louis Philippe, Cuffy the Chartist orator, and Smith O'Brien, in the characters of three waits, singing before Buckingham Palace at Christmas 1848. Our readers will probably thank us for the opportunity of reading once more two or three familiar stanzas. First comes the King—

I left my native ground,
I left my kin and kith,
I left my royal crownd,
Vich I couldn't travel vith,
And vithout a pound came to English ground,
In the name of Mr. Smith.

The lamentation of Cuffy is an admirable mixture of the grotesque and pathetic—

O! Halbert, 'appy prince,
Vith children round your knees,
Ingraving 'ansum prints,
And takin' hoff your hease.
O think of me, the old Cuffee,
Beyond the solt solt seas!

Smith O'Brien's song leaves little to be said on the famous affair of the cabbage garden—

Their fortress we assail:
Hurroo, my boys, hurroo;
The bloody Saxons quail
To hear the wild shaloo.
Strike and prevail, proud Innesfail;
O'Brine, aboo, aboo!

Our people they defied,
They shot at 'em like savages;
Their bloody guns they plied
With sanguinary ravages:
Hide, blushing Glory, hide
That day among the cabbages.

The mere power of grotesque writing is by no means the only noticeable point about these ballads. They mark, as we have observed, the point from which the author started. His opinions were almost entirely the reflection of his sympathies and antipathies; and these underwent a great change in the course of his career as a writer. Here, for instance, are some lines written in 1841, which suit very ill with the temper of *Esmond* and *The Virginians*. Speaking of soldiers, he says—

Go to! I hate him and his trade.
Who bade us so to cringe and bend—
And all God's peaceful people made—
To such as him subservient?

Tell me, what find we to admire
In epaulettes and scarlet coats,
In men, because they load and fire,
And know the art of cutting throats?

The very ballad in which the lines occurred might have supplied the answer. It is called the *Chronicle of the Drum*, and is ten times too long, and in most parts poor enough; but it contains flashes of serious poetry which show that its writer knew how to sympathize with the stronger passions which he then denounced, but subsequently recognized. Perhaps the most spirited passage of the whole refers to the exploits of the old drummer, who is supposed to tell his story. He bares his breast and shows his wounds—

'This came when I followed bold Kleber,
'Twas shot by a Mameluke gun;
And that from an Austrian sabre,
When the field of Marengo was won.

'My forehead has many deep furrows,
But this is the deepest of all,
A Brunswicker made it at Jena,
Beside the fair river of Saal.

'It makes my old heart to beat higher,
To think of the deeds that I saw,
I followed bold Ney through the fire,
And charged by the side of Murat.'

There are several other parts of the same piece which show greater power than the author generally chose to display. Take, for instance, this glance at the execution of Louis XVI.—

'She [the guillotine] called for the blood of our king,
And straight from his prison we drew him;
And to her, with shouting, we led him,
And took him, and bound him, and slew him.

. . . . . .

'I see him, as now for a moment
Away from his gaolers he broke,
And stood at the foot of the scaffold,
And struggled, and fain would have spoke.
"Ho! drummer, quick! silence you Capet,"
Says Santerre, "with a beat of your drum;"
Lustily then did I tap it,
And the son of Saint Louis was dumb.'

These lines, and others that could easily be mentioned, show how vigorous and manly a tone Mr. Thackeray could assume when he chose, and lead us to regret that he should have written so much for *Punch* and from the *Punch* point of view.

Amongst the minor works included in the four volumes of miscellanies, there is one deserving a higher reputation than it has ever attained. This is the story of *Barry Lyndon*, originally published, many years ago, in this magazine. It was, in some important respects, the best novel that Mr. Thackeray ever wrote; though it is not surprising that this should not be the general opinion. As it is less known than his other works, it may be allowable to say a few words on its plot. *Barry Lyndon* is the history of a thorough blackguard. Barry, the hero, who tells his own story, so that the reader is prevented from seeing how much of the book the author means to be considered true, is a noisy Irishman, strong, fierce, wild, and ignorant, full of lies and boasting, who sets out to seek his fortune about the middle of the last century. After a sham duel, in which he falsely supposes himself to have killed his man, he goes from his native town to Dublin, and, after various adventures, enlists as a common soldier, and goes to serve in the Seven Years' War. There, by an ingenious contrivance, he steals the clothes and money of a wounded officer, assumes his character, and deserts. He is entrapped by one of the man-stealers of Frederick II., and serves for five years in his army. There he turns police spy, and is set to watch the doings of a professional gambler, who turns out to be his uncle, and by whose assistance he contrives to desert from the Prussian service. He then becomes bully to his uncle's gambling-table, and goes through all manner of blackguard scenes, which he describes with a degree of pride and self-glorification which is indescribably comic. The scene of the last of these adventures is laid at a small German court; and in describing it Mr. Thackeray tried his hand almost for the only time in his whole career at the melodramatic style of composition. There is a fascinating and guilty princess; an irresolute French dandy, with whom she is in love; a rigid old aristocrat, his grandfather, who cares more for family honour than anything else in the world; and, by way of finale, a secret execution by 'Monsieur de Strasburg,' who, as the lawyers would say, is brought down special for the purpose. The machinery which sets all this going is Mr. Barry's play-table, at which the young Frenchman gambles away the crown jewels lent him by the princess, and so brings her name into discredit. After figuring in this little tragedy, Mr. (or, as he calls himself, Captain) Barry returns to Ireland; and, after much blackguard splendour, bullies a great heiress, Lady Lyndon, into marrying him. She is of superlatively grand family, and has £40,000 a year, which he proceeds to squander in the most reckless manner. By degrees Barry Lyndon, as he is now called, sinks from the extraordinary splendour to which he had risen into a beggarly and almost penniless Irish squire; and at last he falls into the condition of a prisoner for debt in the Fleet prison, where he lingers out a miserable existence, writing his memoirs, and being managed by his tough old mother, who sticks by him to the last, and supports him out of an annuity of £50 a year, with which she began life, and which she had contrived to cling to through all her own and her son's ups and downs in the world.

Barry Lyndon has rather more plot in it than most of Mr. Thackeray's novels. Indeed, one or two of the episodes, such as the story of the German princess, and the story

of Barry's contrivances for escaping from the service of the King of Prussia, are remarkably good pieces of story-telling of the common kind; but in its main features it is like the rest of his works. It is an imaginary biography, the incidents of which bring out by degrees the character of the hero. The incidents themselves, however, are far more varied and important than those of *Pendennis*, for instance, or *Vanity Fair*, and they have an interest of their own altogether independent of their influence on Barry. The army of Frederick II., the state of Dublin in the middle of the last century, the constitution of society which preceded the French Revolution, when all the aristocracies in Europe were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, reckless of the flood which was to destroy them all (a subject which had inexhaustible attractions for Mr. Thackeray), are all described with extreme vivacity, and with that picturesque, truthful touch which no one else could emulate. The most interesting part of the book, however, is no doubt the character of the hero. He is an utter blackguard, boastful, false, selfish, ferocious in a superlative degree, and yet he considers himself in perfect good faith the most spendid, honourable, and magnificent man of his time. All his worst faults he views as harmless and even rather graceful peccadillos; and whenever his villainy brings him to trouble, he persuades himself in the most plausible and natural manner that he is a victim of the conspiracies of his enemies and a martyr to his own guileless simplicity. If it is a great thing to see ourselves as others see us, the power of seeing another man as he sees himself, is much more surprising, especially if the person so seen is a monstrous ruffian, and the person seeing him a thorough gentleman and man of honour.

The merits of *Barry Lyndon* are not such as to recommend it to every one. Many people complain, and not without truth, that they can feel no interest in the history of an utter blackguard and scoundrel. This is very much a matter of taste. It would no doubt be a great defect to write upon such subjects generally, or even often; but to perform such a feat now and then, and as a feat, is a very different thing. *Barry Lyndon* is far more amusing than *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, for instance, and is worked out with far greater depth. It may even sustain a comparison with Fielding's *Life of Jonathan Wild*. There is as much skill in making Barry tell his own story, and in entering into and humoring his own estimate of himself, as there is in Fielding's conscious and express irony, which, indeed, is somewhat too apparent, and is kept up so long as to become wearisome at last. There is, moreover, about *Barry Lyndon* one merit which is not to be found in either of the other works. There are redeeming features in the hero. He is fond of his child, he understands the value of his mother's affection for him, and here and there he has a sort of glimpse of better feelings, and of the possibility of better objects in life than those for which he lives, though this mood invariably dissolves away into noisy rant and drunken mawkishness.

Passing from Mr. Thackeray's minor performances to his more elaborate works, the first place, not only in time but in importance, is undoubtedly due to *Vanity Fair*. It was by this work that he passed from the position of a man known to comparatively few friends, and to the editors of magazines and newspapers, to that of a writer who had contributed something considerable to the permanent literature of his country. It is difficult, and it would hardly be worth while, to add anything to the chorus of well-earned praise which has acknowledged the merits of this work, especially since its author's death. The character of Becky Sharpe alone, rising and falling with every wave of fortune, was enough to make the reputation of any writer. The ease with which she asserts herself successively in half a dozen different positions, and the callous good humour with which she endures the inevitable when all her wiles fail her, is admirable; nor is it easy

to overpraise the fertility with which group after group of secondary characters is delineated, all with a continual supply of interest and vivacity, and all with that little touch of depreciation which for a very long time marked almost every portrait that came from Mr. Thackeray's pencil. At a later period of his life, Amelia would not have been quite such a fool, and Captain Dobbin would have had hands and feet of the usual size. In *Vanity Fair* the author seems to be haunted by a fear, which he never can manage to lay aside, that unless he can make his characters amiable in spite of some foible or personal defect, he has not done his duty by them. He is so eager, for instance, to show that Dobbin is a man of noble character, that he makes him as uncouth as he can in order to prevent his readers from liking him for any other qualities than the ones which he means to praise and honour. This disposition goes through nearly all his books. That extravagant injustice and cruelty which he continually ascribes to women who are meant to be, and who in most things really are, all that is amiable, seem to be meant as protests against himself. 'I and my readers, too, would fall down and worship this woman if I did not more or less disfigure her; but no one deserves to be worshipped, so let us dash in an unjust act or unkind speech to show that she, too, is but mortal.' The ridiculous faults, the deformities, the occasional bursts of passion and defects of temper are always given to the characters whom the author liked. The bad people he appears to feel are sufficiently punished by their natural deformity. Everybody will hate them. The important thing is to prevent the public from feeling too much admiration for the good ones, or to force them, if they will admire, to do so *quand même*, in spite of defects serious enough to justify a very different feeling.

It would seem to be a mistake to attribute any very definite moral to such a book as *Vanity Fair*. It is a sort of protest on behalf of the weak, the meek, the simple, the unsuccessful, against the rich, the prosperous, the man who gets on in the world, the man who has all that he wants, and thinks principally of enjoying himself. If Becky Sharpe is to be reduced to anything so prosaic as a moral, she would be translated into some sort of precept to all women to pass their lives in being fond of their husbands, fond of their children, fond of going to church, given to caressing habits in general, with a certain touch of humorous archness. Above all, they are never to be worldly, never to care for riches and greatness or for fine society. The humour with which all this is worked in, and out, and backwards, and forwards, and the variety of ornaments which are strung on the slender string of story which meanders through seven or eight hundred closely-printed pages, are sufficiently well known to thousands upon thousands of readers. The tune of *vanitas vanitatum*, with the recommendation, in an undertone, of reverence for all manner of gentle, honourable, and high-minded feelings, is no doubt extremely striking, and has probably really done something towards making some part of the community care a little less about some special forms of tinsel; but there always must be readers who will say, 'Here is Vanity Fair as represented by a man of genius; here are officers, country gentlemen and their wives and daughters, men of business, Indian civil servants, clerks, clergymen, all the sorts and conditions of men amongst whom I am passing my life, and the whole raree show which the children in the vignette, at the end of the book, are shutting up in the box from whence it came, does not contain a single person of my acquaintance. My friends manage their estates and do justice, write, or look after their regiments, and have military schemes and business on their hands, or go to their country houses, or buy and sell, or collect revenues and administer justice and look after public works in India, or mind their parishes at home. Sometimes they fall in love and get married or refused, as the case may be, and

every now and then they go to parties and give parties at their own houses; but neither the falling in love nor the party-giving occupies one hundredth part of that space in their lives which these good folks appear to allot to such occupations.' There are, it is to be hoped, very few captains of marching regiments who have to accuse themselves of having dangled for twelve or fourteen years after a woman who did not care for them; and the number of people who have either the patience or even the wish to try to push themselves into the society of the rich and great must be very small. A man who means to preach on the text, vanity of vanities, ought to take for his illustration something that is not obviously vanity. It wants no great genius to show that Dobbin's pursuit of Amelia, or that Becky's ambition to get into grand society in London, is vanity. But we are not all obviously playing the fool. Take a solid apothecary, who makes £1500 a year and spends £1000, and puts by the rest for his children, and if this too can be shown to be vanity, then there is no doubt something memorable has been said; but to stop short of that is to leave the whole matter at a loose end. *Vanity Fair* is marvellously clever; its details may be read a hundred times with constantly increasing satisfaction; but when we view it as a whole, neither the tenderness which lies at the bottom, nor the satire which lies at the top, appear to have an adequate foundation; and both put together, leave all the great passions and strong emotions of life, with the exception of love and vanity, unexplored and undescribed.

Pendennis, the immediate successor of *Vanity Fair*, must be considered inferior to it as a work of art. There is even less story, and what there is is very slight. The only parts of the book in which anything approaching to a plot is introduced, are those which relate to the secret marriage of Warrington and the adventures of Captain Altamont, and these are devices of the humblest and most perfectly well-known kind. The book, notwithstanding this, has very deep interest. It opens altogether a new vein, and describes to the life a matter with which the author was perhaps better acquainted than anything else, and which no other writer has succeeded in describing tolerably well. Pendennis and his friend Warrington represent one section of the class to which they belong to absolute perfection. The state of mind of a well-educated young Englishman who is at once obliged to be satisfied with his scepticism and dissatisfied with himself for being sceptical, was never described with more skill. Few things would be more instructive in their way than a full comparison between *Pendennis* and some of the French novels which aim at describing the same class of persons in France. Nothing could throw more light on the difference between the two nations. The comparison will not quite run on all fours; but Madame Sand's tale, *Horace*, is in many respects analogous to *Pendennis*. Horace, to be sure, is only a student, and his career stops before that of Pendennis; but in many respects they resemble each other. Both are nominally advocates, both are writers, though Pendennis makes more of a profession of it than Horace; both are self-indulgent and idle, and both have the same exterior graces, being handsome, healthy young fellows, vain of their personal appearance, and full of animal life and spirits. There is also a good deal of undesigned resemblance between the incidents of the two stories. Both Horace and Pendennis are in love with two women. Pendennis, indeed, is in love with three at different times. Each has a *fidus Achates*, older and more experienced than himself, who gives him good advice; each draws a full-length portrait of himself by his behaviour on a variety of occasions; and the history of each is a bitter satire composed by a friendly and sympathetic satirist. Here, however, the resemblance ends, and a series of contrasts of far greater importance, and going much deeper, begins. Horace has no particular convictions and very little knowledge; but he is a revolutionist,

prepared, as he supposes, to descend into the streets and kill or be killed for no particular reason except that he likes noise and excitement. When it comes to the point, he generally manages to be out of harm's way; but this is because the cold fit of prudence is on him, not from want of courage. In a word, he is blown about by every wind of impulse, and is always under the power of some impulse or other—generally one of a violent character. There is nothing of this in Pendennis. He is quite as ignorant and superficial as Horace, but he is perfectly well aware of it, and from this no less than from early prepossessions and habits, he draws the conservative inference. He keeps perfectly quiet, and takes the best possible care to get into no scrapes or difficulties at all. So far from having any sort of turn for revolution or anything approaching to it, he is, in a way of his own, loyal to the institutions amongst which he has to live. He rather likes them than not, though he has a natural gift for contempt, and is keenly alive to the weak and ludicrous side of things. He knows, however, that his criticism and contempt are only skin deep, and has a strong impression that the world is not to be set to rights by phrases, and that the best course for him to take is to occupy himself in laughing at its foibles, whilst he takes excellent care not to measure his own force against its strength. The accurate measure which Pendennis takes of himself and his own significance is the most characteristic thing about him, and it puts a profound distinction between him and his French contemporary.

Pendennis also, though quite as sceptical as Horace, is much more moral. Horace seduces both his mistresses, and would no doubt have considered the seduction of poor little Fanny Bolton, the porter's daughter, as a matter in which he ought to gratify his own inclinations without a thought of anything else. Pendennis takes a very different view of the matter. Amongst the other things that he has learnt to doubt, he has learnt to doubt the importance of gratifying his passions, and to doubt the wisdom of acting upon all the suggestions of his own impulses. He always inclines to think that truth, and honour, and virtue, are for some reason or other the right things; and that vice, and selfishness, and self-indulgence, are not; and within certain limits, and subject to some exceptions, he acts on this like a man. In all his weakness, all his shallowness, all the idle pursuits by which he whiles away his time, and earns a luxurious living, you can see that he is haunted by the shadow of something wiser and better, which he respects, and, notwithstanding his sceptical affectations, instinctively obeys. The simple virtues of his mother and his adopted sister awe him. He looks up to his sturdier friend, Warrington, with that respect for manliness and power, which is one of the best things taught at English schools and colleges. The way in which the brilliant novelist, whose books sell in all directions, and whose articles give him a comfortable income, uniformly respects and looks up to the unsuccessful lawyer, with his more solid and less marketable knowledge, is one of the most instructive and characteristic of Mr. Thackeray's descriptions. When Horace wrote a successful novel, he instantly believed himself to be one of the greatest men in France. Pendennis is always half ashamed of his good fortune, and never affects to view himself in any other light than that of a man who happens to have a good marketable knack with three fingers and a pen, by which he is fortunately able to support himself in comfort.

Considered as a picture, *Pendennis* is admirably good; but considered as a sermon, it is open to serious objection. Pendennis ends by putting his head under his wife's apron-string, and taking it for granted that it is his bounden duty and privilege to submit himself in important matters to the direction of one so pure and holy. A youth of irresolute scepticism culminating in a marriage founded on what may be called the religion of a mother's

grave, is, after all, a very poor thing. It is very well to describe it; but it should be described somewhat contemptuously. Indeed, Mr. Thackeray in his later novels, *The Newcomes* and *Philip*, does not flatter Pendennis. He shows that his wife always had the upper hand of him, and that, as is usually the case where the grey mare is the better horse, the grey mare had her weaknesses. There is a fine dash both of prudery and priggishness in Laura's matronly years, at the time of life when she is always hugging a child to her bosom and talking to it and at her husband; and the careful observer may detect a certain openness to flirtation, always in the most strictly correct and Madonna-like way, in the saintly eargerness with which she bestows sisterly or filial caresses on her husband's attractive friends, Colonel Newcome and Philip. In fact, she would appear to have been much the kind of wife that Pendennis deserved, and that every man deserves who cannot take the place of prophet, priest, and king in his own household.

The Newcomes and *Philip*, which is perhaps the least successful of Mr. Thackeray's books, add little to *Pendennis*. Clive Newcome is an energetic Pendennis, and a well-bred Philip—for Philip is far too conscious of the necessity of asserting the dignity of his own position, and of showing off his independence of all considerations which do not immediately relate to his own vanity, to deserve the description of well-bred. The worldly people, the toadies, the artists, and the literary men, are pretty much the same characters as figure in other works, somewhat differently arranged and provided with new decorations. There are, however, some new characters, especially in *The Newcomes*. Colonel Newcome himself, appears to many persons to be the best character in any of Mr. Thackeray's works, and the description of his career and death is not unjustly described as very affecting. There is a certain degree of truth in this; but it is, after all, an unsatisfactory criticism. There is something too luscious in Colonel Newcome's love for his son, and in his dignity and meekness. We should sometimes be glad to forget it for a moment, and there would be more dignity in the character if it were less violent and impulsive. It is melancholy, no doubt, to think of a fine old man falling into deep poverty, supporting all his losses with good-humored patience, and ending his days in the Charterhouse; but, on the other hand, an old Indian colonel had no business to get into such a scrape. He ought not to have allowed himself to be entangled in the affairs of a bank which he did not know how to conduct, and he ought to have known his son too well to get him into a marriage with Rose. All this imprudence may be in character, and no doubt it is so; but this fact in itself diminishes our interest in the man. The least he can do after getting into such a scrape, is to take it patiently; but he would excite more interest if he had got into it undeservedly. On the other hand, in this as in every character he ever drew, Mr. Thackeray was admirably true to nature. The impetuosity, the character determined almost exclusively by impulse, and without so much as a reference to calculation, the graceful instinct as to what is honourable and becoming, and the touching mixture of humility and dignity in adversity, are all qualities really connected with the military character, though they are, it must be admitted, a glorified version of the characteristics of genuine Indian officers.

Another character, or rather group of characters, which have been less admired, appear to us, on the whole, to show greater skill. Florac, and his French friends and connexions, are wonderfully well drawn. Florac, in particular, ought to be accepted by French readers as a proof of the degree in which Englishmen can appreciate and relish the qualities—always remarkable, and at times splendid—of their vehement countrymen. The ease with which he falls into poverty, his perfect contentment there, and the extreme delight with which he tricks his beams, and flames in the fore-

head of the morning sky as soon as circumstances permit, are admirably characteristic.

By the time that he wrote *The Newcomes*, Mr. Thackeray had reached an important point in his career. He had pretty well made friends with the world in which he lived. In his early writings there is a certain dash of Bohemianism, though it is subdued and kept in order by education and early associations. *Vanity Fair* admits of being explained as a representation of a part of the world; but it may also be viewed, and that somewhat plausibly, as a general attack upon things as they are, and as a declaration of war upon the established order of society. In *Pendennis*, the author is wavering. He sees both sides of the question, and admits much more frankly than he did before, and takes much greater pleasure in the admission, that the world has its good as well as its bad side, and that there are many things in it which cannot be called vanities. In *The Newcomes* he has fully made peace. An Indian colonel is a fine fellow. Men of letters are prosperous and well established, and have no right to complain. If young women allow themselves to be sacrificed in the way of marriage to people whom they do not like, merely for the sake of money and titles, why it is, to some extent, their own fault. If they would but pluck up a spirit and say no, they would not, after all, be flayed alive for it. In short, the world is by no means a mere Vanity Fair, though there is such a place as Vanity Fair in it, and a pretty large place too, with which the author's knowledge and connexions in life have made him more familiar than with its more sober and business-like departments. It must be owned that the cheerful and friendly way of viewing the subject is pleasanter than the old one, though it gives less occasion for the display in all their power of the splendid gifts which first made the author's reputation.

The Virginians and *Esmond* form a separate group of Mr. Thackeray's works; and, in our opinion, they show more skill, are of more interest, and are, in every respect, superior to his other works, except, possibly, *Barry Lyndon*, which however admirable in its execution, is by no means so pleasing or interesting as a story. It is improbable, however, that the reputation of these books will be so wide or lasting as that of *Vanity Fair*, or even of *Pendennis*, which will always have an interest of their own, independent of their value as works of art; the one as a protest, more or less exaggerated, against society as it was between 1830 and 1840, the other, as a sympathizing picture of the polished scepticism which prevailed amongst the best-educated part of the comfortable classes of English society in the middle of the nineteenth century. *Esmond* and *The Virginians* are works of art simply, being attempts to reproduce the manners of the eighteenth century. The task is executed with so much knowledge and such extreme skill, that it is much to be regretted that Mr. Thackeray did not employ more of his time upon historical novels. A man who writes about his own times, and who does not care to take the trouble to devise elaborate plots, is always writing more or less expressly about his own state of mind, about the people whom he has observed, and about the views which he has formed of the world and its ways. To do this once in a way, to give mankind one good vigorous account of the impression which they and their doings make upon a sensitive and observant mind, is well enough; but in the nature of things, such a vein must be worked out before very long. *Vanity Fair* and *Pendennis* say something well worth saying; *Philip* and *The Newcomes* do not add much to it. On the other hand, there is no reason why a man should not write historical novels for ever. The materials are inexhaustible, and the interest is never ending. M. Dumas tried to convert all French history into novels, and he certainly did write five or six as amusing books as are to be read anywhere. *Les Deux Diane*, *La Reine Margot*, *La Guerre des Femmes*, *Les Quarante-Cinq*, and a variety of other books of the same series, are little

less amusing than the wonderful history of M. D'Artagnan and his gigantic comrades. Indeed, such books are instructive as well as amusing. We probably owe much of the spirit and vivacity of modern historians, and much of their consciousness that the persons whom they have to describe were real men and women, and not mere names in a book, to the vigour with which novelists, from Sir Walter Scott downwards, have preached the same doctrine. Fiction can hardly be employed more usefully than when it makes past times real to us, and enables us for a time to breathe the air of other ages and to hear the voices which once filled them with joy and sorrow, mirth and love.

The subjects of both *Esmond* and *The Virginians* are happily chosen. There was something specially congenial to the tone of Mr. Thackeray's mind in that of the eminent men of the early part of the eighteenth century. He entered with great ease into the feelings of such writers as Steele and Addison; and he took the trouble to make himself well acquainted with the wars of Queen Anne's time, and with part, at least, of the characters of her great captains and statesmen. His accounts of Marlborough and Webb are excellent, and the same may be said of the sketch of St. John. There is also more of a plot in *Esmond* than in his other works. The hero's wavering between the Protestants and Catholics, between King James II. and King George I., and his way of judging of everything, not upon principle, but almost exclusively on the ground of personal likings and dislikings, are very characteristic of the author. Esmond is intellectually very like Pendennis, though circumstances threw him into a wider sphere of usefulness, and amongst transactions of greater importance. The story itself is unpleasant. There is something almost shocking in the passion of Lady Castlewood for a lad who is in love with her daughter. There is a defect of the same kind in *Pendennis*. It is hardly likely that a woman would fall violently in love with a man with whom she had been brought up as a sister. It is strange that a man so remarkable for the delicacy of his taste should have fallen twice into such a mistake.

The Virginians has most of the merits of *Esmond*, and especially the great cardinal merit of being about something important. Long after we have got tired of reading restatements of a man's peculiar views of life, we can still take great pleasure in looking at his pictures of the American War, the state of feeling in England respecting it, and all the old world stories about the half-forgotten great old houses—such as supplied Harry Warrington with aristocratic companions at the gaming-table, and fights fought long ago, like the unluckly expedition to Brittany, over which, a few years since, French patriotism waxed triumphant. It must, however, be confessed that the story drags towards the end of the book, and that there is a wofully long interval between the first appearance of the twin Virginians and their final exit. It is pleasant to think in how kindly a spirit and with what admirable intentions this book was written. Its author had the friendship of America very near his heart, and did his very best to promote goodwill between the two nations.

The defect of all Mr. Thackeray's later novels, all the good-humored ones, is the want of backbone in the male characters. Esmond and George Warrington (of *The Virginians*) have little more in them after all than Pendennis. Esmond, in particular, as he himself frequently observes, is a perfect fool about women. As soon as he cares about a woman he lets her do what she likes with him. It is to please a woman that he intends to be a clergyman, becomes a soldier, and commits high treason; and George Warrington has a similar weakness in a less degree. This is always admitted, by the parties concerned, to be a fault and a weakness; but it is easy to see that they and the author are barely sincere in blaming it. They seem to think it both an amiable and a venial weakness. In reality, a man thoroughly

given over to such a state of mind would be perfectly contemptible. There is something horrible in the levity of a person who will hold every scheme and object of life at a woman's disposition; and it is nothing less than a great crime to be willing to take the responsibility of contributing to civil war and revolution, for no other purpose than that of pleasing a woman who, after all, cared for nothing but the notoriety of the matter. It is, however, consolatory to find that even in novels women are represented as not liking this sort of admirer. Beatrix serves Esmond perfectly right in jilting him for ten years. If he was so weak as to submit to such treatment from her it was entirely his own fault. It is the unpleasant feature, or, at least, one unpleasant feature, in almost all Mr. Thackeray's writings, that he generally puts love in the light of an amiable weakness, which turns out happily, if at all, by chance rather than by design. It would be sad to be obliged to believe that one of the most important affairs in life is always, or, at least, generally, and in the natural course of things, managed in this blind way, at the bidding of a mere violent passion, springing up, one hardly knows how, and acting, when it has sprung up, with unaccountable and uncontrollable violence. This notion of the matter, however, is much like other parts of Mr. Thackeray's view of life. It is all impulse and passion, sometimes fervent, more often languid, but seldom guided by reflection.

Such are a few of the more obvious remarks which a review of the writings of this remarkable man suggests. Criticism, by its very nature, has much affinity with finding fault, and the merits of a popular novelist are generally so obvious and so fully recognised, that it is hardly necessary to dwell upon them. We should be sorry, however, to seem not to be alive to the merits, literary and personal, of so considerable a man, or even to be too keenly alive to his defects at a time when every one would wish to do to his memory that honour which it so well deserves. Mr. Thackeray's place in the literary history of his country will no doubt be both high and permanent. In some of the gifts of a novelist he fully equals, and in some he exceeds, Fielding, though the foundation of his character was softer and less vivacious; but from Fielding's days to our own there has been no one at all like him in this country. One or two of his French contemporaries resemble him; and no doubt he learnt much from them, though some of their gifts he could not, and others he probably would not, acquire. He is not merely more decent than any distinguished French writer of our day—that is very much a matter of fashion; but he is absolutely free from that prurience which is the plague of French fiction, and which lurks in unsuspected shapes in the pages of several English writers of considerable reputation. There is not in all that he has written a single page open to objection on this score. Every novelist must, by the nature of the case, give to the relation between the sexes a larger place than it occupies in real life, and Mr. Thackeray, like others, is open to this criticism; but love in his writings is invariably what it ought to be—a noble and gallant feeling, even when it is blind and unreasonable. Such scenes as those which make the principal French novels of the day sealed books for modest women, are not only not to be found in Mr. Thackeray's writings, but would be so completely out of place there, so alien to the spirit of the rest of the book, that they could hardly have been introduced even if the author had not been as high-minded as he was.

Of all French writers, the one who most resembles him is Charles de Bernard. Mr. Thackeray used to say himself that he had all his life been trying to do what De Bernard did, and had never succeeded. Like most honest self-criticisms this one was perfectly true. He was a better man than his model; he had more pathos, he drew purer and higher feelings, and an infinitely better state of things; but he never did succeed in attaining to that nervous vigour, that power of

making a good plot without violence or exaggeration — that exquisitely colourless ease of style which made De Bernard the best of all story-tellers. In one point, which had a deep influence on all that they wrote, they resembled each other. They were both gentlemen by birth, feeling, and education; and this puts a stamp on their writings which is absent from those of many members of their calling.

Of Mr. Thackeray's personal qualities it would not be appropriate to speak here. We are not of opinion that by writing popular novels a man becomes common property; and it is difficult to say much of the personal feeling which even short intercourse with him inspired, without employing language which might appear insincere and exaggerated, especially if it were loud enough to make itself heard through the unrestrained and unqualified lamentations which resound round the grave of one of the simplest and most natural of men.

HEREAFTER.

THE gold and rose of the resplendent West
Toned into grey; and in the twilight stirred
With whispering sob the birches; from the copse
Rang the clear mellow notes of Eve's own bird,

Wakening an echo in my pulse and brain,
As sweet and favourite music hath the power
To wake the slumbering memories of our souls,
And paint our past lives in the present hour.

Above the hills uprose a little lamp,
A white thread woven in the black robe of night;
A gold star nursed in the blue lap of Heaven,
Whose soft ray shed upon me its pure light.

There was a time—not far, yet 'tis an age—
When the Past was my Present; and I dreamed
What now it recks not, yet would dream again,
So real to me that tender vision seemed.

From out the wreck of these my scattered hopes,
Ariseth upward through a surging sea
Of mid-way troubles, that bright distant star,
And sets a light betwixt Despair and me.

The yellow sands stretch o'er the curvéd bay
In broad expanse, what time the spring-tides fall
Below the weed-grown rocks, till the slow sea
Turns from its ebb again, and covereth all.

So spread before us lie the things of Earth,
Wherein we catch a glimpse of the sublime;
Anon the tide of working-life flows on,
And all is mergéd in the sea of Time.

In 'The Hereafter' shall these things be plain?
Who knows? It is not given to us to tell;
Short-sighted that we are, we seek to raise
The veil, and *cannot*,—yet it is as well!

ASTLEY H. BALDWIN.

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4. Shakespere's House, from the Garden. The Garden-seat, a Carved Stone, removed from New Place.
5. Living-Room in Shakespere's House.
6. Ancient House at Stratford-on-Avon.
7. Ancient Font in the Parish Church, Stratford-on-Avon, in which it is believed Shakespere was baptized.
8. Porch of Parish Church, Stratford-on-Avon.
9. Grammar School and Tower of the Guild Chapel, Stratford-on-Avon.
10. Ann Hathaway's Cottage, Shottery.
11. Charlecote Hall, near Stratford-on-Avon; the seat of Sir Thomas Lucy (Justice Shallow).
12. Ruins of New Place, Stratford-on-Avon; the House in which Shakespere died.
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(*Reprinted from "The Record."*)

THE advocates for appointing Romish priests to gaols say, "We ask but the reformation of the criminal. We do not ask influence or money, more than is necessary for the object that is common to us all." The following letters from one capable of speaking on the subject, and authentic statements taken from official documents, will show that the Roman Catholic system, when in full action, does not effect the reformation of the criminal, and they are earnestly commended to the serious consideration of magistrates and others.

"In these days we hear a great deal about 'toleration,' and the word is almost as much abused as 'charity.' There are certain practices of Popery which should not even be tolerated, much less endowed or established; but our statesmen and rulers have not the courage to look into these. Robbery, burglary, assassination, treason, are not what men generally consider worthy of toleration; yet from that very Popery, which we endow, as from a well-spring, flow forth these iniquities and crimes. We would not violate men's consciences by forcing or inducing them to profess a faith of which they do not approve; and we would give them liberty to profess any creed they prefer—even the idolatrous creed of Popery. But where that system would trample upon our laws, and violate the sanctity of our hearths, and encourage crimes against the well-being of society—where it would tempt subjects from their allegiance to their sovereign, and invite foreign aggression, and where it would root every feeling of patriotism and love of country out of the heart of man—in these cases the intolerance of Popery is not entitled to toleration, and it becomes the duty of the State to deprive the Papal serpent of its fangs, and thus protect the unwary and the unsuspecting from its deadly sting.

"Above all, we should deprive it of every vestige of national patronage and encouragement. We should expose its errors, denounce its frauds, reject its assumptions, rebuke its pride, curb its intolerance, and punish its crimes. Unless we do this, we shall in due time be its dupes, its slaves, and its victims."—*Constitution.*

To the Editor of "The Record."

"Sir,—The *Times* is lending the influence of its columns to the members of the Romish Church, to persuade our magistrates to appoint Romish chaplains in the different gaols of the county, Lord E. Howard and Serjeant Bellasis having laboured to make it appear that the want of Romish chaplains in the different gaols is the reason why Romish prisoners so often return to gaol, which they say they do in many cases as often as ten or a dozen times. They further wish to make it appear, that if Romish prisoners do attend the instructions given by the Protestant chaplains, it must ever be, as it invariably has been (as they say), quite powerless for good to so-called Catholic minds. Lord Howard and Serjeant Bellasis, I doubt not, have made out a case to suit perfectly the state of their own mind; but are their premises true? I believe not. Romish chaplains, I am prepared to prove, are quite powerless for good to Romish convicts, and more—instead of their ministrations being beneficial to convicts, they are invariably the reverse. As a Protestant and a member of the English Church, I hold that Romanism can only make a bad man worse, and in making this statement I do not display a want of charity, but I advance what is taught by the English Church, and—what is of far more weight—the teaching of the Bible.

"But there are, alas! in England, and among those in high places, and among the members of the press, many who will not be led by the teaching of the Bible, nor by the English Church. I wish, then, to present to such, through your columns, a few facts with which I am personally acquainted, that prove Romish chaplains are a curse in Protestant prisons. Is was my misfortune to spend nearly ten years as first schoolmaster in eight of the English convict prisons, and while I was thus

employed I had ample opportunity to test the value of the services of Romish chaplains among the convicts of their persuasion. Did I find any good result from the constant attendance of the Romish priest? I emphatically assert that in no one case did it ever come to my knowledge that a Romish convict became a better man. And here I would state that, in every convict prison in which I laboured, the Romish priest had access as often as he pleased, and more—he had a place allotted him where he could carry out his own forms and instructions as often as he required. For upwards of fifteen years Romish priests have had ample opportunity to prove their reforming powers upon Romish convicts.

"Now for the results of teaching upon Romish convicts. I now speak from personal knowledge. Those convicts, in all the prisons in which I laboured, who were the most regular in their attendance upon the priest, who were the most devout in their religious duties, were notorious as the greatest scamps in the whole prison, both among the officers and their fellow-convicts. If there was a bloody *émeute* in the prison, these devout Romanists were either its cause or active partisans in it. As a rule, those Romish convicts who keep close to the Romish priest are the convicts who give most trouble in the prison. I say *give*, not *gave*, for it is now as it was five years since, when I laboured among them. Let Sir G. Grey give the country a return for the last five years of the most dangerous and worst-behaved convicts, and you will find, sir, that the vast majority of them will be Romanists, and Romanists who were the most constant in their attendance upon the priest.

"Again, during the ten years I was among convicts, I proved that Romish chaplains do nothing to prevent convicts from relapsing into crime. I remember scores who were ardent followers of the priest, who, after getting their liberty, returned again to a second, and some to a third sentence, as a convict. Some of these partook of the so-called sacraments of the Church. But I cannot charge my memory with the knowledge of one Protestant convict, who, while a convict, partook of the sacrament from the Protestant chaplain, who returned with a second sentence. Such an instance may be known to others: I had to do with some 17,000 convicts, and have partaken of the sacrament with some scores, but never met with one of those men a returned convict afterwards. Such a fact speaks loudly in favour of Protestant teaching *versus* Romish.

"I dare appeal to all the present chaplains and schoolmasters in the convict prisons, if Romish convicts who attend upon Romish priests are not, as a rule, the most hardened and the most dangerous set in all the prisons: there are a few exceptions, but the teaching is proved by the rule.

"I therefore trust that magistrates, before they thrust the curse of a Romish chaplain upon our county and other gaols, will ascertain first whether their presence has been beneficial in Government prisons, where they have had free scope over fifteen years. I believe that it is not the reformation of convicts the Romish priests seek—it is standing, salary, and the means to aggrandize the Romish Church. Believing Romanism to be a pure curse, without one redeeming feature, leads me to make an appeal to you, sir, for the insertion of this letter.

"I remain, your obedient servant,

"WILLIAM THWAITES.

"Whitington, Stoke Ferry, Norfolk,
"*Dec.* 12, 1863."

LETTER No. II.

"Sir,—Sir G. Bowyer said the other day at a meeting of the Berkshire magistrates, that to subsidize a Romish chaplain, and force his instruction upon Romish criminals in the county gaols, was not a religious question. I can fully bear him out in his assertion, as religion, rightly so-called, can have nothing to do with anything so monstrous as forcing any sort of so-called religious instruction upon a mind averse to receive it. The Bible does not contemplate forcing its sacred truths upon minds that will not receive them. All the force the Bible recognises is the force of persuasion.

"But the Romish Church is fully aware that nine-tenths of the Romish prisoners would rather not have the attention of Romish chaplains, but, when left to themselves, choose to receive the ministrations of the Protestant chaplain: it is thus not a religious act to force Romish teaching upon Romish convicts, but it is, without question, persecution.

"I saw it stated, by some of the speakers at the Berkshire meeting, that Canon Ringrove had no desire to make proselytes. The speakers manifested the greatest amount of innocence as concerns the priesthood of the Church of Rome. Rome finds her children falling away from her; and worthless though a criminal may be as such, yet the Church of Rome cannot afford to lose her influence over the debased

and criminal class. Rome is working to get hold of the two extremes of English society, the highest and the lowest. When the two extremes are in the power of Rome, then the great middle class will be crushed between them. Rome desires to keep the ignorant and the debased, as this class is ever ready at her behest to carry on the work of intimidation, riot, and persecution.

"If Rome can get possession of the seat of power, and hold under its influence the depraved and ignorant mass, the intelligent middle class will find itself powerless to confront the fearful tyranny of the Church of Rome. How is it now in France, in Spain, in South America, and until very lately in Austria? And as it is in those countries, Romanists are moving stealthily to bring us here in England. Are we then to sit still and allow Rome to crush the great middle class in England?

"Those in high places seem willing to play into the hands of the apostate Church. Are we to allow the fatal work to go on? Let Protestants bestir themselves: Rome is active. Popish chaplains in gaols is only a part of a great plan by which Rome is working to get in her own power the depraved masses of this land, that presently she may use them to frustrate the work of Protestants, and prevent the preaching, even in England, of the truth as it is in Jesus. Rome wants unscrupulous agents, and where is she so likely to get them as from the criminal class? We saw what a Romish mob can do in the late fearful riots in New York: even here in England we saw what they even now dare attempt, by the Garibaldian riots in London and Birkenhead. Rome has a deep-laid plot against the liberties of England, and some of our statesmen are so infatuated that they are lending their influence to her wicked machinations.

"There are many who thank God that we have the *Record* in England; but I fear that but few of us are sufficiently alive to the dangers we are in from the stealthy advance of the Romish party. We depend too much upon a presumed Protestantism, while Government is giving up piece by piece our Protestantism, and bringing over the nation to the endowment of the Church of Rome.

"We have a Home Secretary who has thought it expedient to permit a Romish chaplain in a convict prison to interfere with the teaching of a Protestant schoolmaster, because several of the Romish convicts of their own accord choose to attend his lectures on the Bible.

"The writer of this letter had to defend his Protestant teaching in a convict prison, when called upon by Sir G. Grey, because that teaching was objected to by Dr. Baldiconi, a Jesuit priest stationed at Gosport.

"Let the Romish priests only get a firm footing in all our gaols, their next aim will be to stop Protestant teaching, and before long we shall see them claim from Government an endowment in every parish in England where there are to be found any persons holding their faith.

"I thank you, sir, for your wise and Scriptural opposition to Popery, and I pray God to grant that your paper may increase in its usefulness, and that the time may never come when England shall again become enslaved to the idolatrous, apostate, and unscriptural Church of Rome.

"I remain, sir, your obedient servant,

"*January 7th*, 1864." "WILLIAM THWAITES.

LETTER No. III.

"Sir,—Since your kind insertion of my former two letters, I have received from many parts of England most kind and encouraging letters, from clergymen and laymen, urging me to go forward in the name of the Lord, and do all I can to oppose the pernicious efforts of the Church of Rome. I am, therefore, emboldened to request from you space for the insertion of one more letter, in which I desire to place before your readers two important questions: first, Is England in danger from Popery? Secondly, How is that danger to be averted? I answer the first question in the affirmative. England is in danger from Popery. Ever since the passing of the so-called Catholic Emancipation Act, Popery has been sapping the foundations of our Protestant supremacy. Catholic emancipation was a political blunder and crime, and we are now reaping its baneful fruits.

"I fear that many of our clergy, and many of our public men, with the great bulk of the people of this land, know very little what strides in the march of power Popery has made in England during the last thirty years. Many, even of the staunchest Protestants in England, little think how subservient to Popish influence is the Government of England. I spent nearly ten years under the Crown in the Home Department, and every year I became more and more conscious that, at the Home Office, Popery was making itself not felt only, but obeyed. Not only did I see Popish priests allowed to interfere with Protestant teaching in English prisons, but Popery was permitted to present to high office in the prisons persons who were

its ardent votaries. Chatham prison for a long time was under the control of a Papist as its governor; and when the Home Office was remonstrated with upon the impropriety of placing at the head of a Protestant establishment a zealous partisan of Rome, the answer of that office was, he could not be removed through fear of the power in Parliament of the Pope's brass band. What a Popish governor in a Protestant prison is worth, is known in England by the terrible riots that prison has seen.

"On all sides we perceive Popery advancing in spite of the laws. Monkeries and nunneries are permitted to multiply, although by law forbidden. The Jesuits are permitted to locate themselves anywhere, and their plots are quietly connived at, while many of their schemes receive countenance from Government, and sanction from Parliament.

"A spurious liberalism endows Maynooth and appoints Popish chaplains, while statesmen such as Lord Derby tell us that Romanism is Christianity, equally with the faith held and taught by Protestants. In our beloved Church we have even bishops who can in public assembly state that Rome holds saving Christianity. In London a monk is allowed to burlesque and blaspheme in a Protestant pulpit; and hundreds of Anglican clergy in England, without let or hindrance on the part of their bishops, are doing all they can to lead their flocks into the fatal fold of the Church of Rome.

"England is in danger from Popery, because the great middle class is asleep upon the verge of the volcano. Millions are Protestants only in name. Protestant doctrine, as distinct from Romish, is to the mass unknown. When I was a boy I was taught to read Fox's "Book of Martyrs," and was shown the fatal doctrines of the Church of Rome. But we live in a too liberal age, a too charitable time, for the truth about the Church of Rome to be fully made known. The great middle class think that the difference between Romanism and Protestantism is only in the name; and this fatal delusion Rome encourages, while she is quietly aiming to grasp within her hand those in high places and those in low. England is, then, in danger through the indifference to Popery manifested by the great middle class of England.

"What, then, can be done to avert our danger? Let each Evangelical clergyman teach his people from his pulpit what Romanism is, and the danger that threatens our land by its insidious advances. This can be done in love. I have been shocked to find what ignorance is abroad in the land concerning the fearful nature of Popery; and when we see Popery rearing its head all around us, surely it is high time that God's ministers should show to their people the fearful nature of the man of sin.

"Let all who hold Protestant truth work for the downfall of Rome. Let us take a lesson from the Papists. They seek nothing less than the destruction of Protestantism in England, and the downfall of the English Church. Shall we let them fight, and with folded arms receive their blows? I call upon every true Protestant to aid the Protestant Alliance and the Protestant Reformation Societies in their Christian and patriotic efforts to save our beloved land from the foul, the polluting, the soul-destroying errors of the Church of Rome.

"In conclusion, I ask, Is not this God's work? Rome is destroying souls wherever she exerts her influence, and in the ratio that that influence is felt, so do souls fall into perdition. In the name, then, of all that is pure and holy, I call upon my fellow-Protestants to be up and doing. Let us try to make every parish and every district a Protestant Alliance.

"*February* 1*st*, 1864." "W. THWAITES."

The following facts, compiled from Roman Catholic and official sources, demand serious consideration:—

Priests in Great Britain (in 1863)		1,445	Convents (in 1863)		186
Chapels, &c.	,,	1,098	Colleges ,, ...		12
Monasteries	,,	56			

Annual Payments by the Treasury for Romish objects in Great Britain and Ireland, viz.:—

Army Romish Chaplains ..	£8,093	National Schools in Ireland (proportion to Romanists) ..	£238,000
Romish Schools in Great Britain	31,035	Romish Chaplains in Irish Prisons and Workhouses ..	10,000
Reformatory Schools in Great Britain	15,154	Romish Reformatory Schools in Ireland	8,965
Maynooth Grant	26,000		

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